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### **Highlands Council Completes Seven County Swing**

Chester, NJ- Today's Council meeting in Hunterdon County marks the end of a three month, seven county Highlands Council barnstorming tour of the region.

"The Council is extremely pleased to have held meetings in all seven Highlands Counties," said Council Chairman John Weingart. "Our decision to go on the road was inspired by a desire to understand what is happening on the ground throughout the Highlands Region, and these meetings were extremely informative in that regard."

At each meeting, members of the host county Planning Department made presentations, giving the Council a picture of both their efforts to date and their visions for the future. In addition, during the public comment periods the Council provides at each of its meetings, many area residents told the members about local issues affected by or arising from the Highlands Act.

"In the six months since the Highlands Council's first meeting, the Council has set a standard we plan to continue as an unusually open and accessible government agency," added Chairman Weingart. "From the hiring of a talented staff, to the creation of subcommittees, reviewing and commenting on the DEP Interim Highlands Rules and setting up a partnership with county and municipal officials, the Highlands Council has been committed to insuring that our planning process benefits from the experience and views of as many people as possible."

"The Highlands Council and its staff have accomplished a tremendous amount in the last six months," said Highlands Council Executive Director Adam Zellner, "and they should be applauded for their efforts. An effective and responsible plan must rest on a solid foundation: we have put the infrastructure in place, assembled the staff, and begun to gather the scientific data needed to write this plan. The ball is rolling, and during the next 12 months we will focus on drafting and then adopting the Regional Master Plan itself."

The next Highlands Council meeting will take place on August 18<sup>th</sup> at 10 a.m. at the Council's office at 100 North Road (Route 513) in Chester.

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